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Asylum: Inside the Closed World of State Mental Hospitals

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house and ending in 1939 with Frank Lloyd Wright's Wingspread and then the Art Moderne Brooks Stevens House, the authors describe in elegant prose 20 Wisconsin residences — both as buildings and as outward signs of the owner's place in society. Verbal *and* visual, *Wisconsin's Own* is erudite but easily read, impeccable in its selection, thorough and thoughtful in its narratives, sumptuous in its presentation. Its descriptions include hand-drawn plans and elevations, contemporary color photographs, vintage images of houses and owners, and intriguing sidebar details, such as an 1878 sketch of the Octagon House and a photograph of Brooks Stevens's 1958 Wienermobile, that offer insight into a contemporary world far larger than that of the single house.

Wisconsin's Own details the society that built the "twenty remarkable houses." It explains the houses' urban context, the materials and methods with which each was made, and beliefs and values made manifest in each building. An 85-year history of the way we have lived in the Midwest, it is illustrious and alive and encourages as it facilitates the "seeing" of much that is no longer visible. A valuable contribution to any history of the Midwest and the United States, it provokes thoughts on time, legacy, social convention, and movements and on the materiality, the house building, that seems to contain all of these.

Asylum: Inside the Closed World of State Mental Hospitals, photographs by Christopher Payne, with an essay by Oliver Sacks. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009. Illustrations. 210 pp. \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewer Jane Simonsen is associate professor of history and women's and gender studies at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. She is the author of "This Large Household': Architecture and Civic Identity at the Iowa Hospital for the Insane at Mount Pleasant," in the *Annals of Iowa* (2010).

Christopher Payne's photographs of interiors and exteriors of state institutions for the mentally ill add new perspectives to asylum scholarship by presenting the hospitals not as they were, but as most of them are: public experiments gone to ruin. Juxtaposing images of the buildings' colossal exteriors with images of interior halls dripping with peeled paint, bathrooms gone to seed, and suitcases awaiting lost owners, Payne presents a visual argument that deinstitutionalization resulted in the loss of a poignant yet necessary form of community.

Neurologist Oliver Sacks's opening essay briefly traces the advent of state asylums as "protective structures" that, in spite of the inadequacies and mismanagement that plagued them, often gave form and structure to their inhabitants' lives (2). As mental illness was increas-

ingly managed by drug therapies from the 1960s through the 1980s, the enormous structures and infrastructures, partially maintained by patient labor, were closed. Payne's own short essay sketches a history of asylum architecture, focusing on Thomas Story Kirkbride, whose architectural theories of the "moral cure" influenced most state institutions built between 1860 and 1900, including Iowa's at Mount Pleasant.

Photographs are grouped into several discernable themes. Building exteriors represent the public face of asylums most familiar to scholars and citizens of communities where asylums are located, even as their details newly impress viewers with their beauty and scale. Interior shots show ward hallways, barred windows, and tubs for water cures. Other images illuminate lesser-known spaces: shoe shops, hair salons, farm buildings, sewing rooms, diners, TV studios, and print shops where patients worked and socialized. Water towers and reservoirs, boiler rooms and bowling alleys, theaters and grandstands, doctors' villages and graveyards testify to the importance of asylums not just as buildings, but as material remnants of an experiment in communal living on a grand scale. Kitchen equipment, toothbrushes, and plastic curlers still at the ready suggest an abrupt end to a well-developed way of life. Material culture lovers will linger over the light fixtures, furniture, and mid-century food packages still trapped in sealed rooms. Payne's final theme is death. Most arresting is a photo of unclaimed ashes of residents, carefully labeled and lined up like soup cans on pantry shelves. This absurd mausoleum brings Payne's central point into focus by exposing the tragedy of the buildings' scale: the asylums were conceived as a humane experiment too lavish and extensive to be sustained or reclaimed.

Payne's photographs are a useful corollary to historical studies of mental illness, which regard architecture as a primary lens through which to understand the asylum movement. Facades were a popular nineteenth-century photographic subject; along with architectural plans, such photographs have helped historians assess the methods of practitioners of the moral cure. Payne's photographs refocus our vision on the infrastructure and interiors that were often hidden from public view and reinforce the importance of architecture for studying patients' engagements with asylum spaces. Perhaps more importantly, however, the collection shows that asylum studies belong not only to medical history, but also to community studies, labor history, and material culture studies.

The book will appeal to historians or scholars of material culture as well as to medical personnel, photography lovers, and citizens familiar with the lore and lure of asylums. Each of these will no doubt

find different stories in the images. Photographs of extant Iowa institutions at Clarinda and Independence invite Iowa residents to reassess their understanding of the hulking structures, and provide tempting invitations to revisit the structures not just as enigmatic ruins, but also as crucial to understanding the economic, architectural, and labor histories of these communities as well as communities in their own right.

The Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway: A Photographic History, by Don L. Hofsommer. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. ix, 296 pp. Photographs, maps. \$79.95 cloth, \$49.95 paper.

Reviewer Jamie Beranek is a researcher and a volunteer in special collections at the State Historical Society of Iowa. He lives in Cedar Rapids.

When I started Don L. Hofsommer's *The Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway: A Photographic History*, I decided to put a Post-it note alongside each photograph that I especially liked. Four readings and two pads of Post-its later, the margins of my review copy looked like a forest of yellow. The photos in this book are that good.

Hofsommer is a prolific writer on railroads, especially those of the upper Midwest. The Minneapolis & St. Louis (M&StL) — “my” railroad, as Hofsommer calls it by dint of having grown up in various Iowa towns along its lines — is clearly his favorite. This book could be considered a pictorial companion to his exhaustive history of the M&StL, *The Tootin’ Louie* (2005). In fact, though, it can stand on its own.

The M&StL was conceived in 1870 by Minneapolis businessmen who wanted rail connections to the outside besides those offered by the Chicago- and Milwaukee-oriented railroads then existing. Its purpose was to transport wheat and coal to Minneapolis and to carry out flour and lumber. At its peak, the railroad had 1,600 miles of track reaching from Minneapolis to central South Dakota, southern and central Iowa, Peoria in Illinois, and, by various connections, St. Louis. Always plagued by short hauls and competition from much larger railroads, the M&StL's history was marked by two receiverships, periods of modest prosperity, genteel poverty, and a post-World War II renaissance before finally being undone by the truck and the automobile. It was merged into the Chicago & North Western Railroad in 1960; much of its mileage has since been abandoned.

The book is divided into six chapters, each corresponding to particular periods in the railroad's history and each prefaced by a brief summary of the years in question. Here, as in *The Tootin’ Louie*, Hofsommer infuses life into each period by discussing not only the financial and managerial history of the railroad but the nitty-gritty of its